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KENNEDY AT THE CAPE.

KENNEDY, the well-known Scottish vocalist, whose professional exploits along with those of his family we some time ago commemorated in an article styled 'Singing Round the World,' lately and unexpectedly paid us a visit. We had lost sight of him, and did not know where he was. 'Here I am once more,' said Kennedy, 'just arrived from the Cape.' 'The Cape! Have you been singing at the Cape?' 'Yes,' he replied; 'I have been singing the Scottish songs of Ramsay, Burns, and Tannahill, not only in the Cape Colony, but in Natal and other places in South Africa, among the Boers, Kaffirs, and Zulus; a famous excursion, the best I ever had.' 'Were all your family with you?' 'No; only my son David, and two daughters. Two of my sons have gone to Milan, to be educated as Italian Opera singers; no fear of them doing well.' 'And what do you propose to do next?' 'We are on the wing for Calcutta; intend to do India; there will be plenty there who would like to hear a good, rousing Scottish sang to mind them of Langsyne. Good-bye; I must be off. My son, David, will send you his account of what we did at the Cape.' And so, gleefully, with a shake of the hand, Kennedy left us to go on his way singing. His life, we thought, must be vastly amusing. It might almost be said of him as of a well-known migratory bird:

Thou hast no sorrow in thy song,
No winter in thy year.

David's book, entitled 'Kennedy at the Cape,' is no great affair, but though plain, it is by no means an uninteresting narrative. There is something original and daring in the idea of a family-party going off to sing professionally in a country in which only a few widely scattered spots are reclaimed from the wilderness, and where travelling is still for the most part on an exceedingly rude scale. The roughing experienced in Australia, New Zealand, and Canada, was nothing in comparison with what had to be encountered in South

Africa. Yet, the party had no misgivings. They sailed from Dartmouth in one of the large and excellent steamers, on board which were several companies of soldiers bound for the Zulu war, and arrived at Cape-Town one bright sunny morning in March. Strange scene on landing. 'What a mixture of nationalities—all shades of colour, ranging from the deepest negro night, through twilight of half and quarter castes, to pure white European.' The grandeur of Table Mountain, towering over all, had an overpowering effect on the feelings.

With a groundwork of Dutch and Malays, there were so many English and Scotch among the inhabitants that the Kennedys were pretty sure of a cordial reception. They gave eleven entertainments, that were highly relished. 'The Scottish element,' says David, 'was very strong in our audiences; and we were told we had been the means of uniting our countrymen together, welding them, as it were, while under the warmth of Scottish sentiment and song.' A capital hint this for a method of curing social discords! Make everything pleasant with a fine old heart-stirring lyric! In all their wanderings, the Kennedys shrewdly look for places where there is a tolerable number of Scotch. They accordingly did not make a tour in the western district of the Cape Colony, 'thinking it would be altogether too Dutch for the Songs of Scotland.' Having finished Cape-Town, they sailed eastwards to Port-Elizabeth, in order to reach the far-off Diamond Fields, where they had every reason to expect an eminently successful run of entertainments.

Port-Elizabeth, or Algoa Bay as it is sometimes called, was found to be a nice town, new, well built, flourishing, with numerous mercantile establishments. So strong a force of Scotch here, that the Kennedys were never done shaking hands with old acquaintances. David says: 'I had no sooner landed than I met two young Scotch friends, both of whom had recently come out, and had got situations almost immediately. Here there is quite a colony of young Scotchmen,

many of whom have come out on three years' engagements. I was told the young men of the "Port" were very fast; and fastness here is an unpardonable sin. A young man is sent about his business pretty smartly if he misconducts himself. Steadiness is even more an essential here than in the old country. In South Africa, the man who cannot hold up his head respectably sinks like a stone.' Five concerts here in a very fine hall.

On the vocalists went northward to Grahams-town, named after the son of Graham of Fintry, the friend of Burns—distance eighty miles, chiefly by a narrow-gauge railway. At this town, the difficulties of travel commenced. A cart and a pair of horses were purchased to carry forward the party over hill and dale, the roads very bad, and often hardly any roads at all. Here and there they lodged for the night at a small inn, or at the farm-house of a Dutch Boer. With a short halt at King William's Town, they made a side-journey to a sea-port called East London, where they sang one night to a densely crowded house, the house consisting of a wooden building with a corrugated iron roof. Returning to King William's Town, the Kennedys pushed on a distance of thirty-two miles to Alice. Here, the only hall that could be obtained was a large store, the counter of which formed a platform. The seats for the audience were composed of planks resting on paraffin cases. The English clergyman lent a piano for the occasion. Near Alice is the mission educational establishment of Lovedale, which was found to be doing much good among the native Kaffirs.

As regards the Kaffirs, who were met with everywhere, they are given a good character for their industry and willingness to work for wages. The chief drawback on their advancement in civilised usages is polygamy, which is only another name for a species of slavery. The girls in a family are sold to be wives; the price paid for each being usually a couple of cows or oxen. The household servants are mostly young men, in negro nudity, or with but very scanty clothing. These dingy Kaffirs are handy fellows, clever at learning a business. They are useful as joiners, blacksmiths, printers, and other tradesmen. Specimens of their printing and book-binding at Lovedale received a bronze medal at the Paris Exhibition. Let us hope that through discreet missionary exertion, this promising race of blacks will be put in a fair way of attaining a creditable position among civilised communities.

The journey was now in an inland or northerly direction, at the rate of about thirty miles a day. At Burghersdorp, the vocalists gave an entertainment which was well attended. To accommodate the audience, chairs were borrowed from the stores, benches from the churches, lamps from the hotel, with tables for a platform. Of this place the author says: 'It possesses the most wonderful person we ever met—an editor who would not take payment for the advertisement in his paper, saying he would not do so, as he had been so delighted at having us visit the town.' Something, however, almost as wonderful occurred. A Dutch Boer refused payment for a night's lodging, saying he had been sufficiently requited by the singing of two or three Scottish songs.

The party made a short stay at Bloemfontein,

the chief town of the Orange Free State, virtually an English town in a Dutch Republic. Proceeding onward, they came upon an encampment of Doppers, a sect of severe religionists who have seceded from the Dutch Reformed Church. 'The Doppers are Old Testament Christians, and believed they were doing a good work in rooting out the Kaffir Canaanites from the land. Their manners and dress are as peculiar as their faith'—a coarse, sour, corduroyed set of people, not pleasant to have any dealings with. A curious account is given of the Nachtmall, or Holy Fair, of these gloomy ascetics, at which there seems to be an incongruous mixture of camp-cookery, feasting, religious observance, and mercantile transactions. Next day, by a stretch of fifty miles, the Kennedys drove into the far-famed Kimberley, in Griqua Land, the capital of the South African Diamond Diggings.

Kimberley, which is under British administration, dates from about 1871. It is situated on a bare desolate moor, four hundred and forty-four miles from Port-Elizabeth, and six hundred and fifty miles from Cape-Town. Kimberley is built entirely of corrugated iron. 'Streets and squares, with churches, hotels, banks, newspaper offices, canteens, theatres, shops, are all of iron. From centre to outskirts the town is a cluster of dwarf iron buildings. The house-tops present the depressing appearance of a closely packed crowd of umbrellas in a wet day. The houses are all of one story: a tailor, for instance, doing a flourishing business in a hut of half-a-dozen feet frontage; a doctor seeing patients in a consulting-room six feet by three.' The market square shews a vast variety of stores, full of native and imported articles. One store was occupied by scores of huge elephants' tusks, and rugs made of skins. A large trade is done in the shops. 'One butcher in fourteen and a half months killed fifteen thousand sheep and twenty-five thousand bullocks; in a miscellaneous store, I was told that sometimes three hundred pounds was taken before breakfast.' The Kennedys lived at the Queen's Hotel, which somewhat resembled a booth at a country fair, but was comfortable and well managed, with a long dining-hall, along each side of which were small bedrooms like the berths in a steamer's saloon.

The account of the great diamond mine, which has been the attraction to the spot from nearly all the countries in the world, is the best in the book. We can present only a few particulars. The mine is an enormously large dug-out hole, bearing a resemblance to the crater of a volcano. 'It is shaped like a bowl, has sloping sides of light-coloured rock stretching down to the blue diamondiferous soil at the bottom. Such is the expanse of the mine, that in the first hasty glance you may actually fail to note for a few moments that it is alive with human beings; but there are more men than would people half-a-dozen villages. The claims lie clearly spread out like a map—an expanse of small blocks, which do not look to be thirty feet square. You see the blacks busily toiling, shovelling on the edge of a steep precipice here, climbing up naked pillars of earth there. Square pools of water gleam in several places, and walls of dark-blue clay enclose and recross the whole bed of the mine. Round the margin of this deep bowl circles a fringe of steam-machinery, working the buckets that run up and down on wires, and

convey the "blue," or diamondiferous soil to the surface.'

Repeated visits were made to this extraordinary scene. The mine, we are told, is three hundred feet deep, and three-quarters of a mile in circumference. The Dutch farm on which it was discovered was bought originally for six thousand pounds; and it could not now be purchased for four million pounds. The blue clay in which the diamonds are found is so hard that it has to be picked, quarried, and blasted like a rock. When brought to the surface, the blue is carted off and spread out, to be desiccated by exposure to the action of rain, or by having water, a dear article at Kimberley, poured upon it. Being then washed in troughs, the diamonds fall to the bottom. Great numbers of Kaffirs are employed. They work well, but amidst temptations, are said not to be particularly honest; for they are sharp at secreting diamonds in their mouth and selling them to brokers; but such tricks when discovered are dealt with very severely. The gathering together of thousands of people eager in pursuit of gain is not quite pleasant to think of. But there is a redeeming feature in this exhibition of mammon-worship. The diamond mines of Kimberley are a vast agency of civilisation among the native races. They learn the language and the usages of the white men, and they carry away with them money and articles of comfort for their families. 'The people know,' says our author, 'that the diamond fields electrified a half-dead continent into prosperity.' Kimberley may not present a satisfactory picture of thrift or moral propriety; but let us leave the loafers, the tipplers, and the gamblers nearer home to throw the first stone.

Even though living in small houses of sheet-iron, the community is not devoid of taste. 'Not the least of the marvels of Kimberley is the manner in which some of the people have rendered the interior of their homes comfortable and charming; in some cases, ornamenting them with choice works of art, pictures, vases, *recherche* furniture, and invariably an elegant piano, on which you hear perhaps a sonata of Beethoven or the latest comic opera of Sullivan. We dined one evening at the house of a gentleman who entertained us with a repast that would have graced any club in Pall-Mall, and which was served by coloured "boys" in a quiet yet expeditious style that would have pleased the most fastidious gourmand.'

Situated far from the coast, in an arid desert, this curiously extemporised town, or more properly encampment, has many difficulties to contend with. Except, perhaps, butcher-meat, articles of ordinary consumption have to be brought hundreds of miles over bad roads by bullock-wagons. We are told that brown sugar has sometimes cost 2s. 6d. a pound. When the Kennedys were at Kimberley, eggs were selling at from 5s. to 6s. a dozen. Firewood is particularly dear; but it is never very cold; no fires are required save for cooking. Water costs 4s. for a large, and 2s. 6d. for a small barrel. Last year, when there was a drought, a small cask of water cost 10s. Milk and potatoes are always dear. The charges for washing linen are from 8s. to 10s. a dozen. Bread is sold at 1s. a pound. Furniture, clothing, luxuries of all sorts expensive, in consequence of the tedious land-carriage; for, says Kennedy, 'even the very town itself, in the shape of planks

and sheets of iron, has been hauled by bullocks over many a thirsty plain and toilsome hill to this far lone-lying spot.' Railway transit would remedy all this; but will the diggings last? If diamonds cease to be found, the town would probably disappear. We do not think there is much chance of any exhaustion of the diamond deposits, but apparently some apprehensions on the subject prevent the outlay of capital to secure railway communication.

The vocalists were favoured with a sight of several small bagfuls of diamonds in the rough condition in which they were dug from the mine. The value of a few put into their hand was said to be two to three thousand pounds. The Kimberley mine has proved the most productive of diamonds in South Africa. Up till the end of 1878, the yield was valued at £12,000,000. All the 'Cape diamonds,' as they are usually called, possess a slight tinge of yellow, which distinguishes them from the old and purely white diamonds of India. Yet, the Cape diamonds, though of less value commercially, rival the Indian gems in lustre, particularly when displayed under an artificial light, and they are alleged to be equally hard. The export from the various mines in South Africa must be enormous. Other precious stones, such as agates, garnets, amethysts, and jaspers, are found in various localities. The whole, we believe, are sent to Europe to be cut and put upon the market. The art of cutting diamonds, which has been long monopolised by Amsterdam, has lately been successfully introduced into London. South Africa is also rich in iron ores, coal, and other minerals, wherefore it may be said to have a great future to look forward to. 'The Cape,' to give the country generally, that name, may be deemed one of the bright jewels in the English Crown.

The Kennedys, as they expected, found a strong Scotch element in Kimberley, and drew around them a circle of appreciative supporters. They performed in the Theatre Royal, which is used temporarily as a Scotch church every Sunday, a pulpit being fitted up on the stage. The songs of Burns were received with rapturous applause. The vocalists sang ten nights, and this was not long enough to exhaust the enthusiasm that had been evoked. In no other town in any part of the globe had the party been so successful. On departure, they were escorted by a cavalcade of Scotch friends for a distance of eighteen miles. When the 'good-bye' was spoken, 'the last link was broken with Kimberley, the most remarkable spot on the face of the earth.'

Elated, yet sorrowful, the vocalists went on their way towards Natal, singing at different places to respectable audiences. One day when the cart was crossing a deep 'spruit,' or gully, there was a violent jolt, which sent our friend, Kennedy *père*, into the air. Before he fell, visions of an amputation and a wooden leg flashed through his brain, and he had sufficient presence of mind to avoid such a catastrophe. Carefully he rolled over, and escaped the wheel by a hairbreadth. A clever feat. We are reminded of the story of a gentleman, a vocalist, who prided himself on the excellence of his note G. Happening to be pitched with other passengers from the top of a stage-coach, his only consideration while flying through the air was that his G might not be damaged

by the accident. The first thing he did, therefore, on being able to sit up in the mud, was to sound his G, which he happily found to be uninjured. Kennedy was equally fortunate. He landed flat on his back in the water, and sustained no other inconvenience than that of being wetted and dragged with mud. At Durban and Maritzburg, where evidences of the Zulu war fell under notice, the singers had good houses. The last entertainment at Maritzburg was honoured by the presence of the Mayor and Town Council; and a number of enthusiastic Scotsmen publicly presented Mr Kennedy with an address and a splendid diamond ring—an appropriate souvenir of a kindly colony.

Returning to Cape-Town, the tour in South Africa was closed by a 'farewell performance to a splendid audience.' The party had travelled 1360 miles of colonial roads, and 1800 miles of colonial waters, 3160 miles in all. They had given 82 performances, singing in 24 towns. Including the voyages from England and back from the Cape, the Kennedys in a professional excursion of six months travelled 17,160 miles. We may be permitted to say in conclusion, that in their extensive and adventurous round they had communicated much harmless if not profitable enjoyment to many groups of exiles from the land of their birth and others; and that in itself must be a source of gratification, independently of the more solid rewards of exertion. But there is something besides. A professional tour like that of the Kennedys, by stimulating patriotic emotions, has a political significance in confirming colonial attachments to the mother-country. We accordingly look upon our old friend with his accomplished family as in a sense messengers of peace, and goodwill throughout the widespread realms of Queen Victoria.

W. C.

A SHADOWY STORY.

A TALE OF THE IRISH REBELLION OF '03.

IN FOUR CHAPTERS.—CHAPTER II.

LIEUTENANT WESTBURY was out with his men early the next day, and once more returned tired and fretful from a fruitless tramp over dreary bogs and waste moorland. It was therefore to a late and solitary breakfast he returned. The only meal at which he joined the family was dinner (in these days the hour was half-past one), and the geniality and warmth displayed there were of such a character as to induce him frequently to wish that he might take that meal too, in solitude. Mrs Decroy, the head of the household, was simply unapproachable; she never even made a pretence of being civil to the alien soldier, never spoke to him save when compelled, and may almost be said to have looked, spoken, and acted as if to prove to the Lieutenant that she ignored his very existence. Mrs Claridge the widow was, like the second bear in the well-known nursery tale, a little better than the first bear, but only a little, inasmuch as she could more readily conceal her dislike, from her having the children by her side, and could easily feign to be so absorbed in them as to be unable to pay any attention to the stranger. As for Miss

Kate Decroy, the foregoing brief sketch of the behaviour of her mother and sister will prepare the reader to hear that what little conversation Westbury held with the family was through the medium of that young lady, who was nevertheless the hottest rebel of the whole, and ventured on such spiteful anti-Saxon speeches that the Lieutenant could scarce conceal a smile. It was well for Kate and her friends that it was a smile which her treasonable outbreaks provoked.

On this morning, as we have already said, Westbury returned tired and worried. The tramp had been unsuccessful as usual; yet his spies assured him—and there was an indefinable rumour afloat to the same purport—that a messenger from France had got through the lines, and had brought a supply of money to the fugitives, who were certainly in hiding somewhere in the district; and it was further said that a foreign ship was soon to be off the coast. His breakfast, late as it was, was duly served, partly by the occasional handmaid of the establishment, one Judith Reilly; but—as was always a point of honour with the family—one of the ladies came to see if all were to the Lieutenant's satisfaction. He had been long enough in the house to know that it was not the step of Judith he heard approaching the door, and his eye brightened as the lock turned; but it would have amused any third party to have seen how immediately the expression of his face changed when the cold stern features of Mrs Claridge met his eyes. In answer to the stereotyped inquiries, Westbury returned the stereotyped answers; and much to his relief, the lady left him without saying a word about the little overnight loan to Biddy. He had been afraid they would mention it, from their fastidious reluctance to accept the slightest favour from the hands of an English officer. He was very desirous of asking after Miss Kate; and he argued that to express a hope that her absence was not due to ill-health could scarcely be deemed going any very great lengths in the way of friendly intimacy; yet he could not do it. There had been such a total absence of the least pretence—to say nothing of the reality—of friendly intercourse, that his courage failed him.

More than once Westbury rose from the table and took a searching glance at the inner window, speculating 'as to what shadow it could have been that fell across his chess-board on the previous night, and trying to recall exactly how the rays of the two lamps affected the objects in his room.

'Pshaw!' he said at length. 'I must have made a mistake; and there's the end of it. Now I come to think of it, I was very dull and drowsy, and perhaps I dozed a little—"perchance," as Shakspeare says, "I"—Umph!' The tone of the conclusion of the Lieutenant's reverie was scarcely so assured as that of the commencement, and was rather that of a man who accepted a solution, none better being obtainable, than that of one who has much confidence in it.

It was his habit each morning to go round to the various houses at which his men were billeted

to see that all was right, and to see them mustered by the sergeant-major. This ceremony took place on a ragged green patch at one end of the village, and strangely enough—or so it seemed to the English portion of the little corps—attracted no idlers, as it would have done in most places. A few children came, but not even these always, and indeed on the rare occasions when any of their elders assembled, their looks and mutterings were not reassuring to the military. Accourting himself for this duty, the Lieutenant was leaving the House, when he met Biddy at the door. The door often stood open, and so far as Westbury could see, every person in the village considered that he or she had a perfect right to pass its threshold at any time. Her aspect was weary-looking and bedraggled. Her rusty black dress, which was as short as an ordinary petticoat, was almost covered with mud, while her shoeless and stockingless feet and limbs were nearly as though they had been plastered with clay for moulding. She had evidently been wet through, and the streams of rain which had run so plentifully down her face, had produced just the reverse effect to that which water is generally intended to have—it had made her dirtier instead of cleaner.

Biddy gave a perceptible start as Westbury came suddenly upon her from his room at the side of the hall. 'Good-morning, Biddy,' said the soldier kindly, overcoming his dislike to the woman for the sake of her patroness. 'You must certainly have been out on the moors to-day, like myself.'

'The mures! Is it the bog-counthry ye mane?' exclaimed Biddy. 'Och! it's meself ye wouldn't find there. It's afther a neighbour's cow I've been all this blessed mornin'! an' a swate dance she's threatened me to; that's all, yer honour.'

'Quite enough too, I daresay, Biddy,' said Westbury good-humouredly, and passed on.

His brief inspection duly made, the officer returned to Boreen House, after a discussion with Sergeant-major Dickles, wherein the latter gave it as his opinion that the rebels must be aided by the Evil One himself, or they never could escape such excellently laid plots as were set on foot to capture them. Indeed, Westbury himself, as he walked away, began to think that if the Prince of Darkness did not assist the men of the bogs, they must have some potent allies somewhere, and his mind involuntarily recurred to Biddy and her travel-stained appearance. He thought of her until he began very much to doubt her story about the neighbour's cow, and to wish he had detained and searched her. He was still pondering over the perplexing affair when he reached his quarters, and in a few minutes was with the family at dinner. Miss Kate was there, and looking better than ever. There was no doubt about that, for there was a glow and freshness on her cheek which can only be given by exercise in the open air; and while the Lieutenant felt that he admired her more, he also made up his mind that she had been for a ride on the moors that morning, and then, somehow, the image of Biddy Quin connected itself with the fancy. Westbury sat near to Madame Decroy; and before they left the table, the old lady, who had not spoken a single word to him, beyond the one or two sentences which rose inevitably during the course of the meal, took occasion to deliberately produce her purse, and with a

formal acknowledgment of his kindness to Biddy, proffered a guinea in repayment of the loan. The Lieutenant had not sufficient change, and Mrs Claridge was appealed to, but she had only gold; and then Kate was asked. As she happened to have three shillings in silver, and the old lady had one, the required amount was made up, which with a few more formal words of thanks, was handed to the officer. With a little confusion, Westbury accepted the money, stammering out a few words as he did so; and at the same moment he glanced almost instinctively at Miss Decroy, who he found was watching him closely. The colour rose in the girl's cheeks as her eye met that of the soldier, and altogether there was a strange and disproportionate amount of awkwardness over this trifling incident.

It was not until he had returned to his own room that the Lieutenant was struck by the strangeness of there being money in the House to pay him—and a good deal to spare—that morning, when there had been none on the previous night. He was quite sure no letter had come, for the military had a practice in those days of carefully noting everything which came through the post-office. Then how did they get the money? This was a more serious question to him, as the commander of the detachment, than it would have been to an ordinary stranger; and again the image of Biddy presented itself, as he recollected her splashed and drenched appearance, her start at seeing him, and the scarcely satisfactory explanation she had volunteered.

The day had cleared up a little, and the sun peeped out now and then; so Westbury left the house and sauntered to and fro on the waste land adjacent, pondering over these things, and thinking a good deal, it must also be owned, of Miss Kate Decroy. While he was thus engaged, his next in command, the sergeant-major, came up. That worthy was on his way to the House with some return or report which it was his duty to make daily; but seeing his officer enjoying a cigar in the open air, had crossed over to him.

'Well, Dickles,' said Westbury, 'so we have had another useless trip. Our old luck.'

'We shall catch them yet, sir,' returned the sergeant-major. 'We pretty well know who to look after now.'

'Is there anything fresh, then?' asked Westbury.

'You won't think it altogether fresh, I suppose, sir,' returned the other, 'because it's not a new thing with the party in question. But O'Flynn and Mullany have both come in, and they say it's certain that a messenger has got through with a large supply of money.'

'Of money!' ejaculated the officer.

'Certainly, sir,' returned Dickles. 'Rebels or no rebels, they can't get on without that; but the question is: Who took it to them? Well sir, the answer to that is, old Biddy Quin. You must know her, sir; she is often at the House. Well sir, O'Flynn has heard of her being seen by a cottar at daybreak this morning five miles on the road to Tarely [this was the seaport previously spoken of]; and Mullany saw her nearly as far out upon the bogs at ten o'clock.'

'Well,' said Westbury, 'how do they connect this with the money?'

'Easily, sir,' replied the sergeant-major. 'She

met the Frenchman, or whoever he was that brought the money, and who dared not come through the lines; and she walked twenty miles this morning through all that rain. She knew where to find the rebels, although we don't; and she did find them, and gave the supplies.'

'But the money was in English gold and English silver,' said Westbury, half-musingly.

'Very likely, sir,' returned Dickles. 'It is as easy for them to get that as any other gold, I suppose. But have you had any information, sir?'

Westbury laughed off the question, but was fain to turn away to hide the annoyance he felt at having been outwitted by those whom it was his duty to secure.

Dickles lingered after his official business was ended; and the Lieutenant, who knew the man's ways, was certain there was something yet to come; and he was right.

'There is one thing I think I should mention, sir,' said the sergeant, 'and that is, that Mullany swears he saw Mr Decroy yesterday.'

'Impossible!' exclaimed the Lieutenant.

'So I should have said, sir,' continued Dickles. 'But who knows? Mullany—he is a rank bad one, I know; but he is the cleverest spy that ever lived—says he believes the Squire is as often in Boreen House as out of it.'

'In Boreen House!' echoed Westbury. 'The man must be drunk or crazy! Why, we have all heard that Squire Decroy escaped to France.'

'Quite true, sir,' said the other; 'we heard it; but the report may have been only a blind. He says too'—The non-commissioned officer stopped rather abruptly here, and threw a curious sidelong glance at his superior.

'What does he say?' demanded the Lieutenant.

'He says,' resumed Dickles, 'that he believes Miss Kate Decroy rode out on the moors this morning, and brought some money and letters into the village; for the priest has got the needful to-day, and he hadn't a brass farthing yesterday. The same with the family at the House. And besides, news has come into the village that never came through the post. Mullany thinks that they considered Biddy more likely to be suspected than the young lady, and so they each brought some, for fear of accidents.'

'Humph! That will do, Dickles,' returned Westbury. 'I will think over what you have told me.' The officer was perfectly justified in giving this promise, as he could think of nothing besides; and long after the sergeant-major had left him, he continued his solitary patrol, and was obliged to admit, on piecing together all the scraps of evidence, that the spy's conjecture was very likely to be the correct one.

The day wore on as other days before it had waned, and at the accustomed hour the Lieutenant saw Miss Decroy. He could not help regarding her a little more earnestly than usual, and he thought she seemed hardly to meet his gaze with her usual steadiness. He spoke to her on some indifferent subjects; but she did not appear to be disposed to enter into any conversation, and soon left him; and then his long dreary evening began again. Many men in his position, especially at that period, would have forced themselves on the family circle; and they had the power for good or evil so much in their hands, that it would have been difficult to isolate him, if he had chosen

otherwise. But though Westbury strove to do his duty loyally to king and country, he had refrained from unnecessarily intruding upon the privacy of the family upon whom he was quartered. In some respects he was as shy and timid as a girl—when he met the frank fearless eye of Kate Decroy, he felt that he was stupidly timid—and so are more soldiers, and sailors too, than is commonly supposed.

The lights were placed as usual, and Westbury's solitary evening commenced. Again he read, and again he placed his chessmen; but now he did it more as part of a set purpose, and the furtive glance he threw from time to time at the inner window, through which the bedroom lamp was shining, told what was in his mind. It was in vain. No sudden shadow on this evening fell across the table, and the most attentive listening could not detect the slightest sound calculated to disturb. At last, tired of the fruitless watch, he rose, and moving the curtain of his outer window, looked out upon the open country. The weather had changed, and the night was beautiful. The moon, now at the full, shone brilliantly in the centre of a deep blue sky, on which scarce even a spot of fleece could be seen; and beneath her rays, even the waste and broken land which stretched away to the barren bog district, took a softness and beauty which was not its own by daylight; and the few trees, black and stunted as they appeared by day, were now silvered by the moonbeams, and thrown into picturesque light and shade. 'All's quiet to-night,' muttered the soldier; 'and I am growing nervous with moping my evenings away like this. I will step outside for half an hour.' In another minute he had kept his resolve, and, cigar in mouth, was sauntering slowly from the village.

He had not gone a furlong before his quick eye—which even in his leisure moments did not neglect the watchfulness which years of danger and trained vigilance had made habitual to him—detected a female figure, black in the bright moonlight, coming towards him. In those days and in that place, the chances were that those abroad at such a time were on no specially loyal errand, and he therefore prepared to accost the comer. As he did so, he felt the pistols in his belt. Not a needless precaution; for the cloak and hood of a woman were then often used to disguise some desperate outlaw, one perhaps on whose head a price was set. As the figure approached, it hesitated, and seemed inclined to turn back or move from the road. This at once decided Westbury, who walked swiftly forward; whereupon the stranger, perceiving that flight was useless, advanced slowly towards him. As they drew near, the officer challenged: 'You walk late. Where do you come from?'

'Is it then such a crime for an Irishwoman to be abroad in the moonlight?'

'Miss Decroy!' exclaimed Westbury. 'Pray, forgive me if I have startled you, or been harsh in my speech.'

It was Miss Kate Decroy; and as though she felt that anything like concealment was beneath her, she partially threw back her hood and gazed full and steadily at the officer. But the steadiness was only for an instant; the moonlight enabled Westbury to see her eyes fill, and to note that the traces of recent tears were on her cheek. He raised his

cap, and turned to leave her, as unwilling to intrude on her distress, whatever it might be; but on second thoughts, he returned to her side: 'Pardon me, Miss Decroy, if I am intrusive. I assure you I do not wish to be so. It would be folly, it would perhaps be wrong for me to pretend that I do not see you are in grief, perhaps in trouble, in some trouble which I can at least assist in removing.'

She turned her face towards him, and shook her head.

'These times are so disturbed,' he continued, 'that I can easily understand how from many sources troubles may arise; especially to—to'—He deemed it best to leave this sentence unfinished, and to begin another. 'I hope you will believe me when I say that if my influence can aid any of the family at Boreen House, or if any exertions I can use—or'—Neither did he find it easy to finish this sentence, so, like its predecessor, it remained incomplete.

'I know what Lieutenant Westbury would say,' returned Miss Decroy; 'and he would add that if his purse could aid the almost beggared family there, it should do so. You are very kind. I mean that,' she continued in a somewhat changed tone, 'we all know it; and in spite of all we may shew to the contrary, we appreciate your generous, your delicate kindness very much; and are thankful that you of all men have been selected to—if we were to have'—Miss Decroy appeared in her turn to labour under a difficulty in finishing her sentences, and they walked on in silence for a few yards.

'It would give me great pleasure,' said Westbury at last, 'if you would allow me to be of any service whatever to you. I wish you to believe, Miss Decroy, that even the fulfilment of his duty by an English soldier is compatible with feelings of—of admiration for the patient heroism of those who have to endure the reverses and sorrows which—as I have seen in more than one country—always follow war.'

To this somewhat lengthy speech, Miss Decroy gave no immediate reply, but turned and looked at Westbury with a more wistful and searching glance than he had ever seen her wear before. He thought for a moment she was about to make an appeal to him; but the expression changed, and then the face was averted.

'I can only again thank you for your sympathy, Mr Westbury,' she said. 'I am not so unjust as to identify the individual with the wrongs—But this is growing rebellious,' she added with a laugh, as though glad of an excuse for changing the hazardous key in which the conversation had been pitched; 'and I must not forget after all that you are a king's officer.'

By this time they had arrived at the House; and although for an instant a wild thought flashed through Westbury's mind, and he wished he could summon up courage to ask her—under pretext of the extreme beauty of the night—to extend her walk, yet he could not summon up the requisite courage. The opportunity was gone, and they entered.

Never before had the little room in which Westbury usually sat, looked so lonely, so dolefully dull and void, as it did to-night; his books, his chess-board, even his cigar-case had lost all charm for him; while, as we have before said, he

was too temperate a man by taste and habit to find solace in a resource which is often but too freely used. 'I shall have that old Dickles here directly, I suppose,' said the officer, musingly; 'and I wonder what mare's-nest will be provided for to-morrow morning. Some loyal farmer—or farmer who wishes to be thought loyal, not that the class is very numerous—or some spy will shew that he earns his money; anything will do. A report comes in, and three hundred men will be set to practise bog-trotting for half a day.—Ay, ay, there's old Dickles, punctual as—' Confound it, and the guard too! What's up now?' The officer rose from his seat as he spoke, with all the listlessness and sarcastic jocularly banished from his face; for the slightest incident varying from the regular routine was enough to startle, and might be the forerunner of serious movements.

Sure enough, as he listened he heard the tramp of soldiers; there was no mistaking their measured tread; and he could hear that the party divided and marched past on each side of the House. He then heard the sergeant's voice in the hall; there was a tap at his door, and then Dickles entered.

'Anything astir, Dickles?' demanded his officer. 'I fancied I could hear you had some men with you.'

'Yes sir,' was the reply. 'There is news of very great importance; and I thought I had better bring the next guard up with me, before they went on duty.'

This was a force of ten men, as Westbury of course knew.

'Well, what is the news?' said the Lieutenant.

Dickles carefully closed the door before replying, and stepped nearer to his superior, and even then he took the precaution to lower his voice as he said: 'It is beyond all doubt, sir, that Mr Decroy has been seen in the village this afternoon. Mullany passed close to him. He was disguised, but Mullany knew him.'

'Mullany! You can't expect me to believe all that such a fellow chooses to invent!' exclaimed Westbury. 'See what useless chases he has led us over and over again.'

'You are right, sir,' assented Dickles, 'quite right; and there's not a man in the company would believe him on his oath. But he is on the scent this time. O'Flynn isn't quite so bad as him, and he has got the news from some quarter. A decent fellow too, who came in with potatoes and so on to sell this afternoon, says he is almost certain he met him.'

'But why did not Mullany arrest Mr Decroy, if he knew him?' asked Westbury, 'and so get the five hundred guineas. Surely he would arrest his own father for half the money.'

'Not a doubt about that, sir,' said Dickles, with considerable emphasis. 'But he says there were two of them together; and even if there weren't, he's too much of a coward to run the risk of a fight where he hadn't five to one on his side.'

'Well, what do you propose for us to do?' asked the Lieutenant, after a little pause.

'I brought the men up, sir, to surround the House, because Decroy may be in it at this moment.'

'In this house!' exclaimed Westbury.

'Yes sir, it's not impossible. If he is, and takes any alarm, he'll try to escape; but I have sent two men to each side, four to the back, and two are inside the front-door at this moment. As we are not certain about it, and as the family might be alarmed, I thought you would perhaps prefer to go over the inside of the House yourself.'

'Thank you for your thoughtfulness, Dickles; I should prefer it,' returned the Lieutenant. 'I will be with you in a moment.' And as he spoke he rapidly buckled on his sword-belt, which he had thrown off on entering the room, and took up his pistols. Stepping from his room into the hall, he found, as Dickles had told him, two of the militia, leaning with grounded muskets at the door, so that no one could pass without their permission; and clustered in the hall, in a state of wonder and alarm, were Madame Decroy, Mrs Claridge, Miss Kate, and Biddy Quin. At sight of the officer the soldiers recovered their arms, while the group in the hall turned inquiringly towards him. He then, as briefly as was possible, informed them of the search it was his painful duty to make.

FROST-PHENOMENA.

SOME few people may perhaps have remarked and remembered an unusual meteorological phenomenon which occurred in London last Christmas night. We had had several weeks of hard frost, and the cold on Christmas morning was rendered more piercing than ever by a bitter east wind, though indications of an approaching thaw were not wanting. About the middle of the day, snow began to fall; but in the evening this changed to rain, which froze as it came down; and by ten o'clock not only were the pavements covered with a sheet of slippery ice, but walls, lamp-posts, railings, &c. were all glazed in like manner. Every object upon which the eye rested glittered and sparkled, looking as if it had received a sudden coating of glass; while from every roof and ledge hung a fringe of icicles, some of them as much as a foot in length. In the morning, the whole fairy-like appearance had vanished.

This sort of thing does not often occur in England, and when it does, it lasts but a few hours at the outside; but in certain latitudes, the requisite meteorological conditions sometimes continue for days and even weeks together, and then the results are most disastrous. The rain continues to fall, and to freeze as it falls; and the crust of ice grows thicker and thicker, until tall trees and miles of telegraph wire are broken down by the enormous weight. Fortunately, the phenomenon is generally arrested before it attains this extreme degree of development; and when it does occur, seems to be almost entirely confined to the steppes of Southern Russia.

It may be remembered that during the winter of 1876-7, frequent references were made in the newspapers to the state of the South Russian telegraph lines, many of which, especially those in the governments of Kherson and Taurida,

were rendered perfectly useless for weeks by just such an accumulation of ice as we have been describing. A German gentleman, Herr Bernhard Bajohr, happened to be journeying from Nicolajew to Berislaw about the middle of December, when things were at their worst; and as the phenomena are seldom seen so fully developed, even in Russia, as they were at that time, it may be worth while to give some account of what he saw. His road lay between two telegraph lines; one the Indo-European, the other that of the Russian government, so that he had ample opportunity of observing and comparing the different effects produced upon the two. But before describing these, we must say something as to the meteorological conditions required for the formation of this peculiar ice-incrustation.

In long-continued and severe frost, the earth is frequently chilled to a considerable depth, and to such a degree that it absorbs the warmth from the lowermost stratum of air, which becomes icily cold in consequence; while the trees, buildings, &c. within the cold stratum naturally share the surrounding temperature. This cold stratum may be from twenty to forty feet in thickness, while the air above is many degrees warmer. If rain fall from these warmer regions, though there will not be time for it to freeze during its short passage through the colder air, yet directly it touches the ground or any other ice-cold substance, it will congeal at once, and cover it, whatever it be, with a glaze of transparent ice, as noticed above. Herr Bajohr observed that when the ice first began to form upon the telegraph wire, it was in the shape of a cylindrical roll, which instead of hanging from the wire, or being crystallised round it, as one would have expected, merely rested upon it, the wire touching its lower circumference only. As rain continued to fall, the cylinder increased in size, until its diameter measured from half an inch to three inches. This was the first stage of development; but then the intensity of the cold abated somewhat, and the rain which was still falling, instead of freezing the moment it touched the roll of ice, had time to trickle over it, and form long rows of icicles, remarkable for their regularity and uniformity. This was the second stage, and the heavily laden wires looked like nothing so much as gigantic combs.

It is not often that the third stage of development is reached; but it does sometimes happen that when icicles and cylinder have attained their full size, the rain ceases, the sky clears, and the sun begins to shine. Its rays are much too feeble to melt the ice; but they pass through it to the more sensitive black wire within, whose temperature is so much raised that it melts the particles of ice in immediate contact with itself; its cohesion with the heavy roll of ice above is destroyed, and the latter, unable any longer to maintain its balance, twists round so as to describe a semi-circle and exactly reverse its position. The icicles now stand up in the air above the wire, while the roll hangs below it; and if there should be more rain, a second row of icicles will be formed opposite the first, producing a striking resemblance to the

backbone of a fish, which is rendered still more perfect if there happens to be any wind blowing in the direction of the telegraph line, as in that case both rows of icicles will be slightly inclined towards the wire in the same direction. This last stage of development may also be attained without rain, should the sun have sufficient power to melt some of the ice; the water from which will then trickle down to the under-side of the roll of ice, and there form icicles in a similar manner. As the sun gains in power, the wire increases in temperature, and melts away more of the ice from within; the icicles, borne down by their own weight, drop lower and lower, until the wire reaches the extreme points of the upper row, when of course the whole congealed mass soon drops off.

Herr Bajohr noticed that the effect produced by this phenomenon on the two lines of telegraph differed considerably, that of the Russian government suffering far more than the other. The posts of the Indo-European line are of iron, and the conducting-wires are thick and strong; and though the wire was considerably stretched, it had on the whole borne well the immense strain put upon it. Here and there, where the line made a bend, the post at the angle, firmly fixed though it was, had sometimes given way, and wherever this was the case, several of the neighbouring posts had also succumbed. But the government line, with its oaken posts and four thin wires, running parallel with the Indo-European line, presented a much more dismal appearance. The oaken posts, somewhat crooked to begin with, had not all proved strong enough to sustain the weight of the four heavily laden wires, and in some places had broken down altogether; while, where they remained erect, the wires were either broken, or completely weighed to the ground by the burden laid upon them. All the posts, both iron and oaken, were covered on the windward side with a crust of ice several inches thick, reaching from the ground to the insulators, where it joined the ice on the wires; and in this way insulation was destroyed, and each post was converted into a conductor, down which the electric current passed into the ground. This was especially the case directly the extreme severity of the weather abated and the ice became less dry. But the iron posts had this marked advantage over the wooden ones, that whereas the latter kept their coating of ice for weeks, these others threw it off directly the sun began to shine. Being black, they absorbed heat more readily, and by melting the inner surface of the ice, soon caused the whole to crumple up and fall off.

In conclusion, it remains for us to say a few words as to the effects of this remarkable frost-phenomenon upon the vegetable world. Trees are everywhere scarce in the steppes, their cultivation being attended with very great difficulty; nor is this to be wondered at when one considers the various climatic influences to which they are subject. During the winter of which we have been speaking, every tree, every branch, every smallest twig was incrustated with ice one, two, or three inches thick; and accordingly the trees in the town of Kherson, chiefly white acacias, lost nearly all their branches, while many of the smaller ones were completely crushed to the earth.

Of the fruit-trees, all of which looked as if they were made of glass, some suffered more, some less, according to the character of their growth. The apple-trees and apricots for instance, with their spreading horizontal branches, were for the most part quite broken down; while the more erect-growing pear-trees and cherries had maintained their balance better and suffered much less in comparison.

CHRYSA LIS.

IN FOUR CHAPTERS.—CHAPTER I.

‘NOWHERE to go, old man? Come down with me. It will be dull enough certainly; but nothing is so dull as Christmas by one’s-self in town. Will you come?’

‘I think so. It’s very kind of you to ask me. I never felt so thoroughly “blue” in my life. Isn’t it always so?’ continued Lewis Hogarth, as he took his friend’s arm and turned with him out of damp muddy Pall-mall into the comfortable warmth of the Junior Carlton. ‘If we have waited and hoped for anything through year after year, it seems of no value when we have it at last; and we almost wish to be back to the time when we were hoping and waiting, without the unpleasant feeling of satiety.’

‘Yet such an acquisition as yours is scarcely likely to lose its charms so quickly, Sir Lewis,’ said his companion, laughing.

George Wynne was a somewhat older, graver man than the friend he had just invited to his home; a little on the wrong side of thirty; of middle height, and unpretending appearance, with one of those calm true faces which bear an expression of strength and self-reliance, and unknowingly inspire trust. The other was tall and dark, scarcely handsome perhaps, but with a certain nobility of countenance, and a winning manner which earned him many friends.

He gave a pretended shudder at the last two words. ‘How sick I am of the sound of this new title of mine! I seem to hear nothing else. My groom repeats it in such an exasperating manner, that I threatened to discharge him yesterday. I tell you, Wynne, I am thoroughly tired of it! If this money had come to me five years ago, you know what a godsend it would have been; but now, what does it matter? Last year I came into enough to set up a yacht and keep my hunter, without feeling myself in hourly danger of being obliged to cross the Channel and end my days as one of the *vauriens* of Boulogne. I really was contented. And now, a fortnight ago, in the midst of a delightful cruise among the Greek islands, I am called home to England to attend my uncle’s funeral; arrive too late, owing to being nearly smashed in a railway accident on the way to Paris; am received by a weeping aunt and five ditto maiden cousins, meekly requesting three months’ time to turn out of that gloomy ghost-haunted structure, where my ancestors glare at one from every corner, and the

rats carouse behind the wainscot. To be overwhelmed with piles of accounts and musty letters, made to interview grim-looking keepers and bailiffs, all Sir Lewisings me! L lectured upon my duties as a landlord, and patted on the head by scores of horrid old villagers, who told me how I had grown, and how they remembered me in petticoats! It was really too much. Of course I couldn't stay down there; and as all my friends have made up their parties for this festive season, I am left in the lurch, and the fog.'

'And you are coming down to enliven us,' said George Wynne. 'We shall be very quiet; only my brother-in-law and three children, and my sister.'

'But I thought your sister'—

'You are thinking of the married one, poor Florence. You do not know my younger sister. Well, I shall expect you at the station to-morrow, 2.25 train. At present I have an engagement, and must run away.'

The new baronet was left looking out over the miry pavement, where a few men hurried along in overcoats, and water-proofed women, exhibiting a good deal of thick boot, struggled on through the driving rain from their visit to the Christmas-decked shops.

'Cheerful season!' muttered Lewis, for to him the festival was little else than a name. Early left an orphan, he had only been as a guest, an outsider in its social gatherings and happy reminiscences; so it all seemed very wearisome and dull. And as he looked back over his checkered life, he wondered what would be the end. He thought of the bright days of his boyhood, the sad struggles with poverty which were his when he grew to man's estate; the careless, useless life when he had partially surmounted them, rendering of no avail the talents God had given him, because the love which had lighted him onwards was quenched by the chill hand of death; of the pure desire and purpose that love had given to his life, and which for years after its loss, had made him wayward and careless. And now that his mind had regained its balance, now that he was once more ready for the conflict, the rusted talents needed no brightening, the new-found energy was useless, for a life of ease and pleasure lay before him. What he wanted, he could stretch out his hand and take. So it was that, ten days before Christmas, he accepted his friend's invitation to accompany him to the little fishing-village down on the south coast.

The next day, in the misty evening, the two drove up to the lodge-gates of George Wynne's home. It had originally been a farm-house, but enlarged from time to time; and with the ancient lichened walls still standing, and the square tower some ancestor of ambitious mind had set upon one wing, the structure had gained such an imposing appearance, that it was now called the Castle. At the gate, the old lodge-keeper came out to welcome them. Wrinkled, toothless, her scant gray hair blown about by the rough sea-wind, she was an unpleasant picture, and reminded the baronet so forcibly of the persecutions of his own tenants, that he turned to the other window of the carriage. He started as he did so, at the utter contrast of

what he saw. In the dark setting of the window-frame, with the shifting light of the carriage-lamp dancing about her, stood another woman, with a face such as Lewis had never seen before; such a face as a painter might have striven in the old days to give to the Magdalene of his imagination, of which the holiness, almost divine, of expression was pervaded by a patient sadness from some deep past grief, the shadow of which still remained; a strangely beautiful picture in the wavering light. Transfixed with astonishment, Lewis sat staring at the apparition, while an exquisite smile deepened over the fair face, chasing away the sadness.

'George!' she cried, dispelling his half-formed idea that the vision was only a creation of his brain.

George Wynne turned. 'Ivy!' he exclaimed. 'You here?'

She stretched a little white hand through the open window and clasped her brother's. 'I am so glad to see you,' she said.—'And you,' she added to Lewis; 'though George of course forgets to tell me the names of any friends whom he invites!—I shall be home in time for dinner, George. I came to see old Mrs Brown's little grandchild.' She drew the crimson shawl closer about her head, and disappeared into the darkness, followed by the old woman's muttered blessings.

'She looks well, dame,' said George quickly.

'Ay, sir. "God's angel" the little one calls her. We could not have well spared her.'

They drove on. 'Wynne, who is she?' asked Lewis breathlessly.

'My sister,' he answered. 'I have been anxious about her. She was very ill last summer. Poor Ivy!'

'What a lovely face!' Lewis continued. 'I never saw any one so beautiful.'

'Yes,' George answered abruptly. 'How cold it is!' He drew up both windows, and was silent till they reached the house.

Arrived at the castle, Lewis Hogarth dressed in his low old-fashioned room, with a conflicting medley of sensations. It was years since he had last been there; but his thoughts were not busy with any phantom of the past; they were now filled with the unexpected beauty of his friend's sister, to whom, when he first heard of her existence, he had not given a second thought.

He found his way down-stairs a little before dinner-time, into the long drawing-room, with dark oak rafters and modern furniture, gay with all the traces of woman's handiwork and presence; and before the door leading to the conservatory, half-hidden by the heavy curtains, stood his hostess, Ivy Wynne.

He came in quietly; and she, absorbed by a book in her hand, did not notice his entrance. For a moment he watched her silently. The face, which he had but half seen in the misty twilight, was far more lovely, now that the form of the head was visible, with its wealth of golden waves. Presently she looked up. 'I beg your pardon,' she said; 'I did not hear you come in.' She closed her book, stepped from the shadow of the curtains, and came towards him.

But as the girl advanced, a great horrified surprise came over the baronet. A mist seemed to come before his eyes, and hide the face he had but one moment before deemed so fair. In its

stead came a crooked misshapen figure, limping with ungraceful, halting motion. Was this the woman—this the woman who for two hours had filled his thoughts?

'George has told me your name,' she said gently, taking no heed of the behaviour of her guest. 'I hope he has also told you who I am?'

'Yes, yes,' he stammered; 'it is—I have—I mean it is a great pleasure to me to make your acquaintance.'

She pointed to a chair, and moved away to her own, a kind of lounge beside the fire. Then he realised the truth. This woman with the glorious eyes and perfect face, with that almost divine holiness of expression, was—a cripple!

CHAPTER II.

Christmas morning, bright and clear, with the sun shining on the snow-laden branches of the great laurels, and washing the silver frost-work from the window-panes. The yule-log burning in the little morning-room, with its holly wreaths and vases of hot-house flowers lifting their delicate petals in surprise at the keen blast which stirred them. One window was open, and through the sere Virginian creeper stems which clustered round it, three little children were sprinkling crumbs on the snow-carpet, printed by the robins' tiny feet as they hopped to and fro gathering their Christmas bounty. They were pretty children, golden-haired, gray-eyed, like their dead mother. Lazily watching them, Lewis Hogarth stood at the other window, drumming the panes, looking out now and then vaguely at the white distance, so peaceful and still, save when at intervals was heard the low sigh of the sea, which stretched away to the right hand, and the first tones of the church bell which came across the fields.

Sometimes in the course of our lives there comes a season—an oasis in the desert as it were—of rest, when the past grows dim and distant, and future there seems none; when in the present we are so content that all the rest may go, so long as we can drift on aimlessly in the same sweet calm. In one of such pauses Sir Lewis Hogarth had been spending the past ten days. It seemed as if some spell were cast upon him, as though some fascination, till then unknown, fettered his senses. Only on this Christmas morning he had awakened to a knowledge of its cause. Why or how he could not tell, but he knew that he loved Ivy Wynne, with a love strong and tender, such a devotion as the Catholics of old time gave to their patron saints; such a love as he had deemed over for him years ago. He had forgotten all besides, utterly contented in that lonely ancient country-house, made bright by the face of its mistress. Those old gray walls, so marred and weather-worn, the thick rough growth of the climbing leaves that bore her name, the sweet pure face—all these things passed through his mind as he stood there, thinking, thinking; for he knew that ere long he would be called upon to make a choice which, in a measure, must have an influence over his whole life. On that first evening, in the shock of his discovery of the fearful blemish Fate had cast upon the woman he since had learned to love, he sought to avoid her. It seemed so terrible—that lovely face and crooked

feeble form, that angel smile and those ungainly movements; till, when he was next morning for the second time alone with her, the scales fell from his eyes, and he saw her as she was; he realised the beauty of the character her brother had been describing to him; he understood the veneration in which she was held by those around her, and then he found himself talking to her as though their friendship had lasted years. And soon she had heard more of his life and thoughts and hopes than any one else in the world. To her he had unlocked the secrets of the hidden past, and noted the tears gather in her eyes as he told of his dead love. For the past, she pitied him; for the future, she spoke to him as no one else had done, of his duties to the old home, which he affected to depreciate. He had never in the course of his wanderings seen another woman like her; he forgot the bent figure and ungainly walk, as the light changed and softened in those wonderful eyes. And now the glamour had been thrown over him, and he knew he loved her.

During those few days much of the sadness had gone from her face—perhaps for the joyous season. As the bells were still pealing, she appeared dressed for the Christmas morning service. 'Children,' she said, 'are you coming with me to church, or will you stay with the robins?'

'Aunt Ivy!' cried the youngest, a little one of four years old, running up and clinging to her with the love and confidence of all children towards her—'Aunt Ivy! where do the robins go to church?'

A great tenderness came into her eyes, a yearning look of motherliness towards the motherless child, as she led her back to the window. 'Up there, May, in the great holly-tree. Don't you see the berries? The fairies have decked them with white feathers in the night.'

'And they have church there, and God listens to them?'

Ivy smiled. 'No doubt,' she said.

'And Alfred says the robins don't go to heaven. Is it true, auntie?' continued the little one, pleading for her favourites.

'I don't know, dear. It is time to go to church. Run up to nurse.'

'But auntie, my little canary was all stiff, and wouldn't eat, and nurse said it was dead; and Alfred shut it up in a night-light box and put it in a hole. It had broken its leg, and could only hop on one, and I hope it will be well in heaven.'

'So do I, darling,' murmured Ivy, as the children sped away. She went to the window and rested her head against the panes for a moment, watching the birds, which had ended their morning meal, and had flown back to the great holly-tree, glowing red through its burden of snow. Lewis went to her, and as she lifted her face, her eyes were shining with tears. 'Children say strange things—don't they?' she said, smiling.

'Yes,' was all he answered; but he longed to take her in his arms and bless her, and tell her all she was to him. Perhaps something in his voice did so, for she turned away and left him.

In the afternoon, Lewis had strolled out with the other men down to the fishers' cottages upon the cliff; but they were soon involved in a discussion on farming implements, which in his state of

mind was not congenial; so he wandered back alone through the winding village street, where the children's merry voices proclaimed it Christmas-time; all happy; and in his heart was a strange unrest, a doubting of the future. The door of the old gray church was open; some sudden impulse made him enter, and go up the holly-decked aisle and sit down in the old square pew where he had sat that morning at Ivy's side. There was a trembling swell of music upon the silence, solemn chords upon the organ, the deep heart-soothing melody of Mendelssohn's grand angels' song, *Rest in the Lord*. The organ throbbed and quivered, rolling its volume of sound among the wreathed pillars, then ceased suddenly, dying away into silence.

'I did not know I had a listener,' said a soft voice close to him.

'You!' he said, starting up. 'Was it you playing?'

'Yes. Why not?'

'Only because, I never heard anything like it,' he replied. 'How and where did you learn?'

'Here,' Ivy replied. 'I had a few lessons, and taught myself the rest. It is my greatest happiness, I think,' she went on softly; for she too had grown to trust him and talk—as she did so rarely—of herself. 'Whenever I am vexed or impatient, I come and play here.'

They were walking slowly homeward now, over the powdery snow. 'Are you ever impatient?' he said. It appeared to him impossible that earthly passions should have place in that nature, which seemed so near to heaven.

'Very often,' she answered smiling; 'more often than I like to say. You, a man, would not understand what absurd little things trouble and fret me.'

'But, to-day?'

'You share the sin of curiosity, I see,' she answered. 'If you wish, I will tell you. I shall be glad, for it is a subject upon which I cannot speak at home. It is the future that troubles me,' she went on quietly. 'I see a change approaching in the distance, coming nearer every day, and I know that my home will soon be my home no longer.'

'But your brother?—'

'You forget,' she interrupted. 'Sisters cannot be always first; it would not be right they should; but—he has been all the world to me.'

'Is George going to be married then?' Lewis asked.

'Some time, I suppose.'

'But surely he would never wish you to leave him?'

'O no; but—women are so different, you see. I suppose a dozen men could live together in that old house without a disagreement, yet two women could not. I have been first so long in the house—and it would never do.'

'But where shall you live then?'

'Oh, here,' she answered. 'I could not leave the dear old village.'

'But you will not be happy?'

'Yes,' she answered. 'I shall grow used to it; and with use will come—content.'

The steadfast smile in the gray eyes as she raised them, shining through a gathering mist of tears, haunted Lewis Hogarth for many a year after, when that Christmas Day had passed for-

gotten among the crowd of others which followed it, when by none but him were remembered all its pleasure and its pain.

MORE SINGING MICE.

SINCE publishing our notice of these tiny musical creatures, we have received several communications from obliging correspondents, which bear out our former remarks that the faculty of singing is natural to certain kinds of mice.

In reply to those who consider the singing an evidence of disease, it might be mentioned that in a specimen examined by Frank Buckland, no traces of disease could be discovered. One friend remarks that the ordinary mouse is so strongly attracted towards the sounds from a piano when being tuned, that although perfectly wild before, it will get as near the piano as possible, and will sometimes be found in it. Mice have also been observed to dance round the piano in their own peculiar fashion, as long as the tuning lasted, and as if they enjoyed it immensely. We offer the following additional facts and testimonies, as a further help to the study of this interesting subject.

A correspondent in India writes as follows: 'One day I was roused early in the morning by the exquisite music of some unknown animal. The melody proceeded from a hole in the next wall, and was very agreeable at that time; but I could not discover who the singer was. I could not recollect to have previously seen any creature lodged in the hole whence this harmonious song flowed. The notes bore a close resemblance to the vajantri music, and I made no hesitation in concluding that that was the source from which ancient Indians derived this music; for that sound produced the same flow of sounds on a small scale as the vajantri pipes of the Hindus. What can this creature be, I said to myself, which sings so sweetly in the wall? Can it be a snake? Afterwards I often heard the same music without seeing the singer. But one evening, soon after the lamps were lit, three mice came out from the wall, and one of them sang the same tunes in my presence. The mice were small in size, as I thought on account of their tender age. Subsequently I often heard their music, until the time of my departure from the place. . . . Singing mice I now conceive are quite common throughout India.'

The next account comes from a lady in Limerick: 'Some time since, we were much astonished, one evening at dinner, to hear a singing or rather chirrup through the room. At times it seemed in the air, then on the floor, and even at the same time from each end of the room. We could find no cause. One suggested the house was taken possession of by crickets; another laughed and cried out: "A real ghost." After we had retired from the room, the servant called me, and showed me a number of tiny mice under the table, singing most cheerily, and eating the crumbs that had fallen. They ate and sang and washed their faces. Seeming so much at home, I kept quiet and watched them. Their appearance was peculiar; the body was shorter, and of a darker colour than the mice we commonly see in houses. The ears

were larger, and the face longer—particularly the nose, which was long and narrow—the eyes large and bright. They sat up and sang such a clear thrilling, joyous song, much like that of the canary, but very much weaker, their little throats throbbing all the time.

We have the following interesting particulars from a lady in Dublin: 'Being a great lover of birds, and indulging my fancy to a rather considerable extent, I pay the usual penalty, that of being subjected to frequent inroads of mice. It is no unusual thing to see five or six running about my bird-room almost tame, picking up the seed scattered from the many cages hung around. Some years since, my mother, a delicate old lady, who lived very much in her own room—which was directly over that in which I kept my birds—complained that she was frequently awakened during the night by the constant warbling of my canaries. This I knew to be impossible, as, being a very light sleeper, I should have heard them myself, as the birds were kept in my dressing-room, which opened on my own bedroom. This was going on for some time, and though I moved some of my singing-birds, still my mother complained. At length, one evening my housemaid called me, saying that one of the birds had got out of his cage, and was singing behind a large chest in the room; that she had lighted a candle to look for it, but could not find it, though she heard it singing, and she feared it had got into a mouse-hole. I went up at once, and most distinctly heard the warbling, and felt quite puzzled, as I knew no bird would sing in the dark and under such circumstances. The note was not that of a canary; but as I had several foreign birds, I thought one of them might have escaped; but on looking at the cages I found all right. I returned to the drawing-room really astonished, saying the notes must have come from the ghost of a dead canary.

'I generally read and work in my bird-room, to enjoy the society of my feathered friends; and in a few days after I had heard the strange song, I was reading, when I was attracted by the same notes, but much louder, and evidently coming from more than one vocalist. On looking, I saw three mice picking up the seed, and at the same time singing as sweetly, though *not quite so loud*, as a good canary. They seemed larger than the common mice, and darker. They were so tame they scarcely minded me, and remained until they had eaten as much as they wished. They became daily visitors, and every one in the house heard them. Strange to say, they first appeared in the upper rooms. As our house was isolated, they could not have come in from a neighbouring house. They disappeared as mysteriously as they came, which I attributed to the presence of a small Spanish greyhound, a great mouser, whose mode of dealing with them was to pounce suddenly on them and to swallow them whole. I cannot say how much I missed the little warblers. I considered them a great acquisition, quite as much as any singing bird. I have never since seen or heard a singing mouse, and was ungrateful enough to have forgotten the pleasure they had given me, until reminded by the article in your *Journal*. I feel quite positive that the song is *not* the result of disease, as I never saw fatter, sleeker, or more merry mice; and there must have been a number of them, as they were heard in

several parts of the house, and remained about a year.'

A business man in Edinburgh detained in the office a little later than usual one evening, had the pleasure of hearing one of these little creatures perform. 'Having occasion,' he writes, 'to remain a little late one evening, my attention was attracted by what seemed like the singing of a canary at a distance. Being somewhat puzzled to account for this, after some search we found the song proceeded from a mouse under one of the desks, apparently in search of food, as a piece of bread placed near it speedily vanished. The mouse gave another short song, took himself away, and has not since been heard of. The song was somewhat of a monotone, but sweet withal; a continuous sort of trill, now and then somewhat piping.'

A correspondent kindly sends us the following curious anecdote: 'Some years ago, in my school-days, myself and four brothers had a tutor. My father fitted up a room for us, which we called our school, wherein we had a piano, upon which it was the rule of our tutor to give myself, brothers, and two sisters lessons in music every day. You may suppose from this that the piano got some fearful thumping daily from five very rough lads alone. During our lessons some of the higher (treble) notes of the piano began to stick—that is, they would not rise after being pressed down. Our tutor said this was caused by dampness, and recommended the instrument to be wheeled round to the fire at nights to cure these sticking notes. But after trying this plan several times, with no result towards its object, our tutor was determined to give the piano a thorough cleaning, and in doing so found, to our great astonishment, under the treble notes two mice-nests, one of which had five young ones. The nests were made chiefly of silk, taken from the ornamental wood-work in front of the piano, in which we had often been surprised to find holes; and my mother on several occasions accused myself and brothers of pushing our fingers through the silk and making these holes. Now the building of these nests must have been going on while we were practising on the instrument, as we had heard several times something, as we fancied, inside the piano making a gnawing noise, little dreaming at the time that it was musical mice who were at the bottom of it all!'

CHRISTMAS IN PRISON.

BY ONE LONG SINCE RELEASED.

THAT bright and joyous season of the year, when even the hearts of criminals are made to feel its exhilarating influence, had come round. Long and anxiously had Christmas Day been looked forward to by many, as a day which would give us some little enjoyment. Enjoyment, do I say? Yes; enjoyment; for such is the extraordinary nature of man, that the very smallest change from ordinary existence will give new zest to life and make it for a time more endurable. Thus with us poor prisoners, Christmas Day had come round again; and even as the lively bells outside sent forth a merry peal, ushering in the festive morn, so did their sound strike up within us all the better thoughts and pleasurable feelings of our hearts. The surly turnkey for once unbended in his ordinary stern reserve, and opened

his lips to return a civil answer when the prisoner—forgetful at the moment of that janitor's unrelenting severity—passed the compliments of the day.

Everything conspired to make us happier than we had hitherto been. The sun shone forth in unclouded majesty, and though its rays descended not so low as our wall-encompassed yard, yet we could see it shining clearly on the surrounding lofty buildings. The weather too was remarkably mild; more like a morning in May; so that there was nothing to chill the warmth of feeling we each experienced.

This year Christmas came upon a Sunday, which thus caused us the loss of a holiday; for had it fallen upon a week-day, that week-day would have been a holiday. Christmas Day is ordinarily a day of rejoicing. But when it comes on a Sunday, much of the old-fashioned rejoicings and festivities is put aside till the following day by persons who are free to do as they please. In prison, however, not so. The boon of a Christmas Day when it falls on a Sabbath consists only in the extra fare that is then given. It stays not the ordinary dreary, monotonous toil which would begin as usual on the following morn. But this did not trouble us much then. The happy day had come which was to give us some change from the diet we had been living upon so long; and though it was only *one* meal extra, still it was known to be such as many outside would be glad to jump at. In fact this was the anniversary of roast-beef, potatoes, and beer, to be served out to the prisoners in addition to the usual allowance; and most eagerly was the day looked for weeks previously. The same indulgence would be given on New Year's Day; but generally Christmas was considered the most enjoyable.

By this time I had got so accustomed to my hard but clean barrack-bed, that I could ordinarily sleep very well. On the present occasion, however, many thoughts had kept me awake through much of the night—thoughts of those belonging to me; for young as I was, I had got a wife—and thoughts of those too whose agency had brought me there. Had *she*, my poor partner, any Christmas dinner? Had *they*, rich as they were, better fare in prospect? And if they had, could they eat it with the same health and strength that I, their prisoner in jail, now possessed?

As the first dawn of day peeped through our windows, every one got up and dressed in his coarse but clean attire. Then on the door being opened, all took a brisk walk in the yard, with a more cheerful countenance than I had noticed for a long time. Little 'Bobbie'—a bird we had caught weeks before, and let loose again—came flying down from his post on some high turret which had the sun's rays upon it, to look for a few extra crumbs; and as he pecked away at a quantity that was soon thrown to him, it seemed as if he too hopped about more lively than usual, while his chirping notes appeared more musical. Such was the welcome accorded to the little bit of new life which on that day came to enliven our poor hearts.

The officers also, dressed in their best, walked into the place with a more bland and animating expression on their features. Even K—relaxed his usual scowl, and something like a smile could be seen on his face! Every one seemed to feel

that it was indeed a day of joy—though, alas! not so to too many—and frequent blessings were heaped upon the heads of those who thus caused the wretched prisoners to participate, if ever so slightly, in the general hilarity of the season. Within our prison, there happened to be not one under 'severe punishment'; and consequently all, save the sick, could share in the additional comforts and pleasure of the day.

To me, the first salutation was from Old Sam, echoed by others: 'A merry Christmas to you, Blank!'

'The same to you, old boy! and you too, mess-mates!' was my reply, as like salutations passed around, and conversation, principally about the extra dinner, became general.

'Is it settled, Sam?' asked one of the newcomers, addressing the old man, he being considered the oracle of the ward, and in his capacity of wardman, knowing the most. 'Is it settled that we are to have the extra dinner to-day?'

'Certain sure,' was the reply. 'I heard Mr K— give directions about it not many minutes ago. It'll be sent out to bake, afterwards cut up in front [the front offices], and then brought down here in tins.'

'But is the beer going to be allowed?' queried another.

'Ah!' replied Old Sam. 'You'll find it come in here by gallons, and regularly served out, as is always done at them times. I knowed all about it long ago, though I wouldn't say nothing then, as in case you should be disappointed.'

'And pray, Sam,' said I, 'how came you to know so much beyond every one else?'

'Because,' he replied, 'I ferrets out everything; and if I hears half a word, I'll find out t'other half if I can, when it's for my good in any way to do so.'

Satisfied, however, in our own minds, without placing too much dependence on what *he* might say, we patiently waited the dinner-hour. All was carried on as usual until that time. The service in the chapel was performed in accordance with the ceremonies of the day, and it struck me there was more earnestness in attending to it by the prisoners than usual. Perhaps it was because there was a little of something new to be heard in addition to the ordinary daily routine of official religious worship. And this again shews how beneficial, variety even in such matters, would be. But whether or no, great attention was now paid to what was uttered from the pulpit.

After coming from chapel, the prisoners went to their respective yards, where they had full liberty to exercise themselves as they pleased till the dinner-hour. Now, I must observe here that the dinner-hour originally was noon; but a few weeks previous to this date it had been altered to one o'clock. To-day, however, the customary allowance for dinner was served out at noon, so that the extra Christmas fare should be a supplementary meal at two P.M. What we had for the common food at twelve o'clock was the usual bread and soup, nothing more. This was hardly touched by any one, most of us saving it for some other time. Then began our preparations for the great feast. The table was neatly laid; plates and knives and forks were placed in good order; and the chimes of a neighbouring clock outside were

impatiently listened to as we counted the quarter-hours. With regard to our having plates and knives and forks, I must explain that they were allowed to be sent in by friends from outside; the cutlery, however, being collected in a bag by the wardman after every meal, and given to the turnkey at his office in the central lodge. At length the quarter-hour before two sounded, and then we saw come down from the front a huge wicker concern, lined with tin, and called the bread-basket. This was filled with the best, or so considered best, white bread, and a pound of it was served out to each man. By the time this was done the church clock outside struck two, and then several large tin dishes, laden with separate allowances of the baked beef and potatoes, appeared. The sight and smell of them were almost a feast in themselves, for nothing of the kind had we caught glimpse of for many a long day. Boiled food of the same description, it is true we had had; but then it was neither of such good quality, quantity, nor cooking.

The first lot of beef and potatoes passed us by, followed by a large can of beer holding about six gallons. This went through the middle lodge to the correction or felon side; and so did the second and third arrivals, much to the increase of our longing desires. Presently it came to our turn; and each of us soon had a pound of solid good beef, the same quantity of potatoes, and a pint of porter. Need I say with what zest we quickly sat down in our places to enjoy this unwonted feast! Picture it if you can, my readers. I have it all before me now as I rewrite these words from the fading original. Yes; the whole scene is in my eye now, and all I then felt, with all I have since gone through, and the many other Christmases spent in many strange places, amid many wondrous scenes and peoples, civilised and uncivilised, since that hour when, with other prisoners, I greedily fell-to on the really good fare before me. Oh, with what relish was it eaten! No gourmet could have plunged into the daintiest dish with more gusto than did we tackle the tempting and ample supply before us. Nor did we—hardened and reprobate as doubtless all prisoners are considered to be by outsiders—forget to quietly ask a blessing, and also thank the generous donor of that feast. To me, it seemed there never could be better food. Indeed, I sincerely hoped that all I knew might have as good.

The health of those who had given us this treat was pledged in a manner which no one need have been ashamed of. It came from the hearts of men made happy for a time in the midst of their misery, by the bounty of others. And if those kind persons could have seen the joyous countenances around that table, it must have diffused intense pleasure within their own benevolent hearts.

It may seem strange to say so, and yet hungry as we had felt, not one in the ward could manage the whole quantity of meat belonging to him. I was satisfied before half had been eaten, and consequently reserved a portion for my supper and the next day. No doubt the beer in a measure lessened our appetite, for I have often since noticed such to be the case, especially when it was porter or stout. However, in our ward it was found that with our ordinary food added, we

had a sufficiency to last us comfortably for three days.

During the time we had been enjoying our dinner, in came the governor and chaplain, the latter with a benevolent expression playing about his face on seeing us so happy, as he said. The governor also made some pleasant remarks, and promised us the indulgence of a larger fire than usual in the evening, and to a later hour. By this time I had got to the head of our table, not exactly by seniority though, as on account of convenience for my duty as yard-washer and attendant, and through the friendly courtesy of my companions. Thus from my seat, and without disturbing myself, I could easily look upon the others as they busily plied their knives and forks. It was a curious and an interesting sight. All appeared as ordinary common individuals, and to my gaze, not one then had any of the look which habitual or professional criminals generally possess. Yet there were two or three noted characters seated at that board, though only, this time, here as misdemeanants. Next to me on my left was poor A—, the talented scholar, teacher, thinker; and now, whatever previous wrong he had done, an earnest-minded, good man. Adjoining him was B— C—, the well-known 'smasher' or utterer of base coin, a short man, with a sunburnt laughing countenance. He had endeavoured to 'palm' a piece of money, but failed; and when taken, swallowed the bad half-crown, at risk of suffocation. Ultimately, under the doctor's hands, the spurious coin was recovered, and brought in evidence against him.

Opposite to me was Old Sam, grown gray in crime—reckless, hardened by a career so truly wonderful and horrible, even to suspicion of murder, that what I learned of him would be a startling history by itself. Yet even he was not *all* bad. He too was in prison as a misdemeanant for coining, and so serious was his offence, that he had got three years.

Among others around the Christmas table was a gentlemanly looking man who had got a sentence of six months' imprisonment first, to be followed by seven years' transportation. His offence was perjury while in the police force, and trying to get a conviction against an innocent person to whom he owed some grudge. He had a rather unpleasant time of it; though to the credit of prisoners be it spoken, that after a first hard fling at such men, they abate their indignation, and as all there are in a measure alike—criminals real or assumed to be—they try to be quiet and agreeable. This policeman had another to join him while I was there; and they both quarrelled fearfully, letting out many a secret as to the doings not only of themselves, but the Force generally and the orders given them. Another character before my eye at that Christmas table was a half-silly, dwarfish young man, more like a boy than one grown up. A foundling, he had never known the tender care of parents nor the guiding voices of the good. Ever in some trouble, which was often forced upon him, I pitied him, and wished I were a rich man, to have taken him by the hands when both of us were free.

One more was a surly morose fellow, who knew several in the ward, and was an 'out-and-out 'shake-buzzer'; that is, an expert thief from ladies.

alone. He mentioned a case which I could not doubt—for in there a sort of freemasonry prohibited lies among each other—in which he was the real culprit, while another man was transported for it. He was in look so like the other man who was coming quietly along at the time, that when he stole a lady's gold watch and her purse, the innocent man was pointed out by the bewildered lady, and despite his assertions to the contrary, was found guilty, and sent away!

Besides these, we had three or four more of a quiet and gentlemanly appearance in manner and tone; one of them very reserved and even haughty in his bearing. No one in the ward knew him, and I never heard who or what he was. I fancied he must have been high in position outside; for even in talking occasionally with me he would speak abrupt and with a curt-ness not very pleasant to bear. If the officers knew his offence, it was studiously kept from us. His sentence of six months was without hard labour. If alive and chancing to read this, he will remember me, not only from one particular conversation we had, but from the special events of the evening following that Christmas dinner.

The afternoon was spent in talking and walking, and at supper (tea-time) our gruel was scarcely touched. How could it be, the horrid stuff, after such a 'feast for the gods' as we had but just enjoyed! Then came lock-up; and as soon as the wardroom door was closed upon us and darkness had set in, a huge fire was made in the chimney grate, the wooden forms placed around, and the whole of us seated in circle before the cheering blaze. All that was now wanted, apart from freedom, according to Old Sam, was tobacco, which delicious weed the sly fellow pretended he had not got, though I had seen a quid secretly stowed away in his mouth. The next thing was for one or more of us to spin a 'yarn'; and here I might moralise and advise to some possible good, were I not limited to space. Enough then to say that, though nearly every one there could tell many an 'owre true tale' of strange interest, and though it is well known that the professional criminal delights to boast of his deeds, yet on this occasion, and indeed nearly all my stay there, never a time but what all talk was hushed when I proffered, or was entreated to relate a something concocted in my brain from some of the works I had read—*Ivanhoe*, *Rob Roy*, the *Talisman*, and Walter Scott generally, Dickens, then beginning his fame, James, and Fenimore Cooper. Sometimes the *Arabian Nights* or Bulwer's earlier novels were all more or less put under contribution by me. And it was curious as well as interesting to note the different tastes of my companions. Indeed I could not help psychologically studying them under this aspect of their minds, for it gave me an idea of what might have been their careers had each been always able to do as he now penitently wished.

I have often thought of this scene on that, to me, most sadly memorable Christmas evening, and have wondered whether any of my then companions are alive, and what has been their fate. I could have inquired, or sought out perchance in the criminal records, as to one or two who, I feared, were too surely doomed to continue in such a life; but the theme was too painful for me; and after my release, I dreaded

anything approaching the subject, except to lay out in narrative form the many notes I had made while there, and which I may perhaps yet offer to the public. But if any of them are alive and chance to read this, they will remember the scene and the narrator.

Not till midnight, as the church clock in the free street outside told us, was my tale done; and we went to our rest, all more or less thankful to heaven for what we had received, and grateful to the benevolent donors for our feast.

A FOLDED LEAF.

A FOLDED page, old, stained, and blurred,
I found within your book last night.
I did not read the dim dark word
I saw in the slow-waning light;
So put it back, and left it there,
As if in truth I did not care.

Ah! we have all a folded leaf
That in Time's book of long ago
We leave: a half-relief
Falls on us when we hide it so.
We fold it down, then turn away,
And who may read that page to-day?

Not you, my child; nor you, my wife,
Who sit beside my study-chair;
For all have something in their life
That they, and they alone, may bear—
A trifling lie, a deadly sin,
A something bought they did not win.

My folded leaf! how blue eyes gleam
And blot the dark-brown eyes I see;
And golden curls at evening beam
Above the black locks at my knee.
Ah me! that leaf is folded down,
And aye for me the locks are brown.

And yet I love them who sit by,
My best and dearest—dearest now.
They may not know for what I sigh,
What brings the shadow on my brow.
Ghosts at the best; so let them be,
Nor come between my life and me!

They only rise at twilight hour;
So light the lamp, and close the blind.
Small perfume lingers in the flower
That sleeps that folded page behind.
So let it ever folded lie;
'Twill be unfolded when I die!

J. E. PANTON.

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1st. All communications should be addressed to the Editor, 339 High Street, Edinburgh.

2d. To insure the return of papers that may prove ineligible, postage-stamps should in every case accompany them.

3d. MANUSCRIPTS should bear the author's full Christian name, surname, and address, legibly written.

4th. MS. should be written on one side of the leaf only.

5th. Poetical offerings should be accompanied by an envelope, stamped and directed.

Unless Contributors comply with the above rules, the Editor cannot undertake to return ineligible papers.

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